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INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE
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RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 5363
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 3091
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 2956
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 3607
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RHMCSUU/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
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RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 3659

C O N F I D E N T I A L ASHGABAT 000802

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SCA/CEN; DRL/IRF

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TAGS: [KIRF](#) [SCUL](#) [SOCI](#) [PGOV](#) [TX](#)

SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: UPDATE ON PENTECOSTALS IN ABADAN;
STILL WAITING FOR REGISTRATION

REF: ASHGABAT 208

Classified By: Charge Richard Miles, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) On June 24, Political Officer met with Pentecostal pastor, Ruslan Atajanov, the leader of a small unregistered group located in the town of Abadan outside Ashgabat. Atajanov's group has been waiting three years since first applying for registration. During Political Officer's last meeting with Atajanov in February, the pastor was both patient and optimistic that registration would come soon, despite postponement of a hoped for December 2008 decision (reftel). Atajanov now explained that his group, numbering about 20 adherents, is still waiting. Two weeks ago, he was in contact with the Deputy Head of the Council on Religious Affairs, Nurmhammet Gurbanov, at which time he was told that the Pentecostal group's registration was awaiting only the decision of the Commission on Registration located at the Ministry of Justice. The pastor was left with the impression that registration was imminent, and he said he expects a decision by mid-July.

¶2. (C) Atajanov said that, despite the lack of registration, his group has not suffered any particular problems. He said members keep a low profile and he expressed a preference for worship in small groups, rather than uniting with the Pentecostal group in Ashgabat. (NOTE: Although once registered, the Ashgabat Pentecostal church was unable to successfully re-register and currently operates unofficially. A number of religious organizations were de-registered ten years or so ago. This church may have also been in that group. END NOTE.) Atajanov indicated that despite his group's unregistered status, they are able to obtain permission from the authorities to celebrate special holidays as a group, gathering in public in a rented cafe. In part, he explained his desire for registration by noting the kinds of social outreach activities that the group would like to undertake, including helping people in prisons and orphanages. He said without registration such institutions would not cooperate with the group.

¶3. (C) COMMENT: Nothing appears to have changed for the Abadan group during the past five months. Given the lack of transparency in the registration process, it is impossible to

judge whether there is any more basis for the pastor's
current optimism than there was earlier. END COMMENT.
MILES